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EXCISE

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FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5967

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 4671

EXDIS

1. EMBOFF BRIEFLY REVIEWED ELECTION PLANS WITH [redacted] MORNING SEPTEMBER 1. [redacted] WAS EVIDENTLY RELAXED WITH POLLING LESS THAN FORTY-EIGHT HOURS AWAY. HE FEELS THAT SCA HAS DONE ALL IT CAN TO INSURE THAT ELECTION WILL GO SMOOTHLY AND THERE IS NOTHING LEFT NOW BUT TO AWAIT THE RESULTS.

2. [redacted] TOLD EMBOFF (WHOSE ACQUAINTANCE WITH [redacted] DATES FROM 1963) THAT IN HIS VIEW MILITARY VICTORY IS FOREGONE CONCLUSION. HE DOES NOT, HOWEVER, EXPECT THIEU-KY TO ROLL UP A MAJORITY. THEIR PLURALITY, ACCORDING TO HIS ESTIMATES, SHOULD BE IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD OF FROM 35-37 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL VOTE. IN THE URBAN AREAS, HE EXPECTS THAT THEIR POPULARITY WILL BE DOWN AND THEY MUST DEPEND UPON THE RURAL AREAS TO SWELL THEIR

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TOTALS. HE FEELS THERE IS BOUND TO BE SOME "DIRECTED" VOTING IN THE COUNTRYSIDE BECAUSE, AFTER ALL, PROVINCE AND DISTRICT CHIEFS WILL FEEL, RIGHTLY OR WRONGLY, THAT VOTING RETURNS FROM THEIR ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS WILL REFLECT ON THEIR PERFORMANCE OF DUTY AND INFLUENCE THEIR FUTURE. THUS, THE SIMPLE PEOPLE OF THE COUNTRYSIDE -- AND THIS INCLUDES THE

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ETHNIC MINORITIES -- WILL BE GENTLY URGED TO VOTE FOR THE THIEU-KY TICKET. [redacted] QUICKLY EMPHASIZED, HOWEVER, THAT ALL OFFICIALS INSTRUCTIONS FROM THE PRESIDENCY TO THE SCA AND OUT INTO THE COUNTRYSIDE HAVE SPECIFIED THAT THE GVN WISHED ALL OFFICIALS TO DO THEIR BEST TO INSURE FREE AND HONEST ELECTIONS.

3. ASKED ABOUT WHEN RETURNS WOULD BE AVAILABLE, [redacted] GUESSED THAT BY THREE A.M. MONDAY MORNING (SAIGON TIME) ENOUGH VOTES WOULD BE TABULATED TO PERMIT AN UNOFFICIAL POSTING OF THE PRESIDENTIAL AND VICE PRESIDENTIAL TOTALS. SENATORIAL RESULTS, BECAUSE OF THE MANY LISTS, WOULD BE SOMEWHAT SLOWER IN COMING IN. HE FEELS THAT BY LATE MONDAY OR EARLY TUESDAY THREE OF THE WINNING LISTS FOR THE SENATE WILL BE KNOWN.

4. AS FAR AS THE SENATE ELECTION IS CONCERNED, [redacted] RE-PEATED THE OFTEN HEARD REMARK THAT IT IS TRULY "THE NAZIONAL

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LOTTERY". HE IS CONVINCED THAT NO MORE THAN FIFTY PERCENT OF THE VOTERS WILL HAVE ANY IDEA AS TO PREFERENCE WHEN THEY ENTER THE SENATORIAL VOTING BOOTH. THUS, THEY WILL CHOOSE SIX LISTS AT RANDOM AND PLACE THEM IN THE ENVELOPE, BASING THEIR SELECTION ON THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF THE LISTS SYMBOL OR SOME SUCH INCONSEQUENTIAL CONSIDERATION. THE OTHER FIFTY PER CENT OF THE VOTERS WILL BASE THEIR CHOICE ON PARTY OR CANDIDATE PREFERENCE AND WILL VERY PROBABLY VOTE FOR LESS THAN SIX LISTS.

5. EMBOFF ASKED [redacted] IF HE HAD AS YET ANY IDEA HOW MUCH ELECTION WOULD COST GVN. HE RECALLED THAT PROVINCIAL AND MUNICIPAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS IN MAY 1965 HAD COST IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD OF 60,000,000 PIASTERS. [redacted] SAID THAT A PRE-CISE ESTIMATE WAS NOT YET POSSIBLE; HE FELT, HOWEVER, THAT THE COSTS WOULD PROBABLY RUN IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD OF 500,000,000 PIASTERS.

6. COMMENT: WHEN IT COMES TO THE ORGANIZATION OF ELECTIONS

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[redacted] IS PROBABLY THE SINGLE MOST KNOWLEDGEABLE VIETNAMESE BUREAUCRAT. HIS CIVIL SERVICE DATES BACK TO PERIODS AS DISTRICT CHIEF AND PROVINCE CHIEF UNDER THE DIEM REGIME. [redacted]

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[redacted] HE IS A SOUTHERNER BY BIRTH AND POSSIBLY HAS HUONG SYMPATHIES, BUT THESE ARE WELL-SUBMERGED BENEATH THE FACADE OF A FIRST-CLASS ORGANIZATION MAN. HIS PROGNOSTICATIONS AND COMMENTS HAVE BEEN ACCURATE IN THE PAST.

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